30

INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State P.L. 14 VIETS (723)

CONFIDENTIAL

45

Action

Info

NKENVZCZCMJA791JIA701
RR RUEHC
DE RUMJIR 699 1911235
ZNY CCCCC
R 101140Z JUL 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
RUHHHQA/CINCPAC FOR POLAD
RUMJFS/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
STATE GRNC
BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 699

007415
1967 JUL 10 AM 9 23

SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AU TRUONG THANH

REF: SAIGON 606

1. AU NGOC HO, FORMER ASSISTANT TO AU TRUONG THANH WHEN LATTER WAS MINISTER FOR ECONOMY AND FINANCE, CAME TO SEE EMBOFF TWICE DURING PAST FEW DAYS. HO EXPLAINED THAT HE IS SUPPORTING THANH'S CANDIDACY ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT EXPECT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CAMPAIGN HIMSELF.

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 699 C O N F I D E N T I A L

2. HO WAS PRIMARILY INTERESTED (PROBABLY ON THANH'S BEHALF) IN EMBASSY'S REACTION TO THANH'S CANDIDACY AND BASIS ON WHICH HE IS RUNNING. (THANH IS USING "CEASE-FIRE" SLOGAN WITH AN EMBLEM THAT IS LABELLED, "NO MORE BOMBS.") EMBOFF STRESSED THAT WE ARE IMPARTIAL IN THE ELECTIONS, THAT OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS HIS CEASE-FIRE SLOGAN SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO DEFINITION OF THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH A CEASE-FIRE COULD BE BROUGHT ABOUT. HO AGREED THAT A SIMPLISTIC "PEACE" PLATFORM WOULD BE MISUNDERSTOOD BY MOST VIETNAMESE AS WAS POPE PAUL'S UNCLARIFIED CALL FOR PEACE OF SOME MONTHS AGO.

3. HO THEN ELABORATED SOMEWHAT ON THANH'S PLATFORM, SAYING THAT IT IS NOT BASED ON "PEACE AT ANY PRICE", BUT THAT CESSATION OF ALLIED BOMBING ATTACKS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY CESSATION OF VC TERRORISM AND MORTARING OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS. HO'S MAJOR POINT WAS THAT WHEN THE EVENTUAL HANOI-SAIGON CONFRONTATION TAKES PLACE ACROSS A CONFERENCE TABLE, SOUTHERNERS MUST SPEAK FOR SOUTH VIET-NAM AND THEY MUST BE SOUTHERNERS WHO ARE INTELLECTUALLY QUALIFIED TO

CONFIDENTIAL

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Evan Gaubert DATE 10/5/21
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON (S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☑ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
FOI EXEMPTIONS

DECLASSIFIED

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 699 C O N F I D E N T I A L
UNDERSTAND ALL THE RAMIFICATIONS OF NEGOTIATING A SETTLEMENT. (HO IS A NORTHERNER.)

4. DURING PAST WEEK THANH AND RUNNING MATE VU VAN HUYEN HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING COPIES OF VARIOUS DOCUMENTS THEY HAVE WRITTEN: (A) A "TO END THE WAR" DECLARATION OF PURPOSE OF THEIR CANDIDACY, WITH STATEMENTS THAT "WE ARE SUPPORTED BY NO ORGANIZATION, BY NO POLITICAL PARTY" AND "WE PLEDGE OURSELVES...TO BRING AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS, A UNION BETWEEN THE CIVILIANS AND THE MILITARY, AND TO ACHIEVE THE END OF THE WAR"; (B) LETTERS TO THICH TINH KHIET, PRESIDENT OF UNIFIED BUDDHIST CHURCH, AND POPE PAUL EXPLAINING PURPOSE OF CANDIDACY ("THE END OF THE WAR IN OUR MISERABLE COUNTRY"), LETTER TO TINH KHIET ASKING BUDDHA TO PROTECT THEM AGAINST "THREATS OF BRUTAL ACTS" AND (C) LETTERS TO THIEU AND KY ASKING THAT THEY GUARANTEE SAFETY OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES. (COPIES OF LETTERS WERE ALSO ACCOMPANIED BY ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS.)

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 699 C O N F I D E N T I A L
5. THANH HAS ALSO FILED COMPLAINT WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AGAINST THIEU-KY TICKET ON GROUNDS THAT THEY ARE CIVIL SERVANTS WITHIN PURVIEW OF ELECTORAL LAW (SEE SAIGON 425). WE HAVE ALSO HEARD REPORTS THAT THENH HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO GET AGREEMENT AMONG ALL CIVILIAN SLATES THAT THEY WILL ALL WITHDRAW IF THIEU AND KY DO NOT RESIGN AS CHIEF OF STATE AND PRIME MINISTER RESPECTIVELY. IT IS ALSO APPARENT THAT THANH HAS BEEN TRYING TO USE FOREIGN PRESS AS SOUNDING BOARD AS EVIDENCED BY SOUTHERLAND (UPI) ARTICLE, REPORTS WE HAVE FROM OTHER JOURNALISTS, AND ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF HIS LETTERS.

6. COMMENT: AS WE HAVE NOTED IN OTHER REPORTS (SAIGON 613), FORMER ASSOCIATES OF THANH HAVE PULLED AWAY FROM HIM AS A RESULT OF HIS IRRESPONSIBLE ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT THE PEACE ISSUE. SOME OF THEM SAY PLAINLY THAT THANH IS PLAYING THE VIET CONG'S GAME. BUNKER
BT

DECLASSIFIED